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Palm Sunday  
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Immanuel Lutheran, Michigan City

Hosanna seems like the proper prayer for us today. It means “Save us, we pray.” From what? From sickness and death, from joblessness and financial difficulties, from depression and anxiety, from stir-craziness with all our current restrictions. Save us, we pray, O Lord.

From what were the crowds in Jesus’ day praying to be saved? Well, they had some similar hopes and different ones. They came because they saw or heard Jesus’ raising of Lazarus. He can heal the sick and raise the dead. They came because they hoped for a king to free them from Roman oppression. They came because they were poor and needy. And, I would say, stir-crazy too. If we’re suffering from being confined for a few weeks and the hardships which have resulted, remember the Jews had been restricted and oppressed for hundreds of years! That’s why riots and rebellion kept breaking out. They were stir-crazy. They were longing for the promised freedom and salvation which would only come with the restoration of a Davidic king.

So, when Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and then processed into Jerusalem, they thought, “This is it! This is our king!” And they exploded with praise! (Much like I think I might break out into a dance when we finally get to gather again as a congregation!) ...But, we read, that even the disciples who believed in him “did not understand these things at first.” Imagine their imploded hope and joy when Jesus’ coronation turned into a mockery, with crown of thorns and purple robe so that He could be beaten and spit upon. He appeared before the government bound and accused of blasphemy. The crowds were bursting with condemnation.

What use to them was this humble King? ...But this humble King had come to be humanity's Savior from the source and cause of all our ills: our sin.

We are all hoping for this pandemic to be over soon. We are hoping our country pulls through. We're hoping to be rescued from sickness and death. We're anxious for things to return to normal. Maybe they will, maybe they won't. The Jews ended up losing their city and temple in the year 70 AD, and they never got the king they wanted. Christians suffered a few hundred years of persecution. God only knows our future.

True enduring hope, true Christian hope, places its confidence in what we know with absolute certainty is true and will happen, but we cannot yet see. This Christian hope endures through pandemics, poverty, and persecution. It remains unbroken despite the seething rage of Satan and the clamorous wailings of the world, and despite the defeat of death. It is a steadfast faith in these words: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming!" (*Daughter of Zion* is another name for the Church).

Your King, who reigns with infinite power over pandemics and all the affairs of this world, is coming for you. He has stamped out the greatest pandemic of them all, one that affects every human being and the entire world, and one that is 100% terminal. He comes with His kingdom to give us eternal life as a free gift.

You who are distressed and anxious about your restricted lives, remember that *for you* our infinitely powerful, all glorious, God, who fills the universe with His presence, humbled himself

to be contained by human flesh, restricted his glory to suffer pain and sorrow, and limited Himself with morality. Our God was captured and tied up, bound and beaten, led to Golgotha, and nailed to a tree. The One who laid the earth's foundations was entombed and sealed up in the earth. All this was out of love for you, to save you from your sins and free you from death and hell, and to take you to a place of limitless joy and blessing and freedom.

Fear not, daughter of Zion; Christ is risen! No pestilence could bind him, no sin of ours, or devil. The seal of death is broken! Christ is no longer humbled. His power is not restricted or bound. His kingdom cannot be overwhelmed or shut down. He is our victorious King. He reigns in glory and fills us with His life and Spirit. Behold your King is coming, breaking the chains of sin and death by His Word and Sacraments! His raging flood drowns the Old Adam, buries our sins, and heals our souls with His Spirit. His Word casts out devils and strengthens us to overcome every hardship and evil. His Supper fills our sick and tired and dying bodies with His healing, invigorating body and blood.

Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming, riding on the clouds with angel armies and trumpet blasts. He is coming in glory to storm the kingdoms of this world and rescue you from them. He will tear open your homes, workplaces, and graves in order to find you and raise you up. He will put an end forever to sickness and death and bear you up on eagles' wings to your eternal home. He will cast Satan into the lake of fire and burn up every virus and cancer, poverty and need, the wicked and every evil thing so that they can harm you no more.

Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel! Amen.